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THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST THE GLORY OF HIS HOUSE.

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A

SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

NEW BRICK MEETING-HOUSE

IN WEST BOYLSTON,

August 22, 1832.

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.....
BY JOHN BOARDMAN,

Pastor of the Congregational Church in West Boylston.
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SERMON.



HAGGAI, ii. chap. 9th verse.

THE GLORY OF THIS LATTER HOUSE SHALL BE GREATER THAN OF THE FORMER, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS.

THESE words refer to the second Temple which the Jews were commanded to erect for the services of religion. The old men, who saw the first Temple in all its magnificence and glory, knowing the depressed condition of their nation, weakened in numbers, scanty in resources, and frowned upon by some of the Persian Kings, discouraged the Israelites in their work, saying, *The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built.*

But He, who knows the deception men practice with themselves, said, *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?* If your poverty and distress be so great, that ye cannot erect a temple to the honor of my name, how have ye built such commodious habitations for yourselves? Is it becoming for you to live in splendid dwellings, when there is no house in which my name is recorded, whither the tribes go up to worship? *Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the moun-*

tain, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified. The Most High greatly encouraged the Israelites to go forward—*Yet now be strong, all ye people of the land, and work, for I am with you, and my spirit remaineth among you ; fear ye not. The silver and the gold are mine.* The resources of your whole nation are at my disposal, and may be drawn out for this praiseworthy enterprize. Be not discouraged in this undertaking which ye have commenced for the worship of Jehovah. *For yet a little while, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.

Particular reference is made here to the bodily presence of Christ, who was yet to come in the flesh, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and who would expound the law and instruct the Jewish nation in that house which was about to be erected for God. The second Temple could not surpass the first in its costly decorations, for there were a majesty and glory in Solomon's temple, which have never been equalled. Its furniture was of gold, and the building itself, without its appurtenances, was the wonder and astonishment of the Eastern world. There were special marks of the Divine favour connected with this building, which the second temple never enjoyed. The Ark of the Covenant rested here by the Oracle of God, and the Shechinah, or Divine presence, abode in it. Here too were the Urim and the Thummim, by which the High Priest consulted the Supreme Be-

ing in momentous cases, and received responses from the sacred place. The number and prospects of the Jewish nation were greater and brighter, at this time, than at any subsequent period in their history. Yet, the second Temple would be more honorable and glorious, by the presence and instructions of Jesus Christ, the great teacher of righteousness, whose advent, sufferings, death and resurrection, formed a new era in the history of man, and opened to his mind bright visions of eternal blessedness.

The sentiment of the text is this:—*The presence of Christ constitutes the glory of an house* dedicated to the worship and service of God.

Christ is present in the assembly of his saints. Wherever his disciples, the children of God by the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are assembled for his worship and to seek his blessing, there is he spiritually present, to comfort their hearts, invigorate their graces, and enliven their devotions. There does he listen to their petitions, and their pious offerings go up as a sweet memorial before God. In his house he has recorded his name, and set apart him that is godly for himself; there his glory is shadowed forth, and his people are accustomed to celebrate his praise. Christ says, Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Yes, the blessed Jesus is graciously pleased to grant his presence, and cheer his disciples with the precious consolations of his Spirit. It is then they have proper conceptions of his character, and the blessings purchased by his love, and enjoy a wonderful exhibition of his transforming influence.

'The souls of believers are brought into an intimate union with Christ, to whom they have consecrated their powers and substance. The language of their affections is: It is good for us to be here. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. They earnestly desire to see the power and glory of God as they are seen in the sanctuary.

Where the blessed Gospel of the grace of God is clearly exhibited, and its sacred doctrines unfolded; where the great and sublime truths of religion are preached with power, and made effectual by the Spirit of grace; where Christ and him crucified is distinctly presented as the only foundation of hope to the sinner and joy to the christian, *there* is Christ present, warming the heart to lively gratitude, and extending peace to the returning penitent. The exhibition of Christ in his true character, God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit—Christ suffering for the sins of the world, and rising from the dead for the exaltation and blessedness of sinful men, is the glory of the gospel. Paul says, We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Where the vicarious atonement is received as the truth of God, and the merits of the Saviour are regarded as the only foundation of hope and salvation, *there* does Christ dwell as the glory of an house consecrated to his service.

The presence of Christ constitutes the glory of the sanctuary, when the people are induced to attend upon the instructions of religion, and bring themselves under the influence of gospel truth. It must be admitted that greater attention is paid to the services of religion, and greater interest manifested in its important results, than in former periods of the Christian church. The means of religious knowledge and grace, and the facilities of moral improvement, have multiplied in variety and extent adapted to the wants of this growing republic, and there is pleasing evidence of increasing attention to these means, with earnest desires to become savingly interested in the religion of the Bible. Most people in our communities are accustomed to observe at least the external forms of religion, and, I trust, with confident hopes of the blessing of Heaven. The house of God is the gate of mercy, and his truth is the grand instrument of salvation; and the supreme object of preaching is the salvation of men, in subserviency to the Divine glory.

When this object is accomplished, when sinners are found seeking an interest in Christ, making themselves new hearts, turning from sin to holiness, repenting and believing the gospel, as all are bound to do by the grace of God—when the deep impression and feeling conviction of the great company are: I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord, our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem; when multitudes go up to the house of God in company, and take sweet counsel together, watching at wisdom's gates, and waiting at the posts of her doors for in-

struction : a *glory* fills the sacred place ; Christ is spiritually present, the truth is impressed on the conscience, the Spirit of God rendering it effectual in the conversion of sinners to the faith and obedience of the gospel.

An house of worship is glorious with the presence of Christ, when an earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world becomes general in the congregation. When the hearts of men are humbled and melted down into submission to the will of God, a cordial love of his character and complacency in his government, by the outpourings of the blessed Spirit, (and these wonderful displays of the power of truth, and the mercy of God, are eminently characteristic of the present times)—the doings of God are then seen in the sanctuary, the salvation of the soul is the chief concern, and sinners are brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

If there ever be celestial enjoyment on earth, it is when the Holy Spirit, the blessed Comforter, sheds his gracious influences on worshipping assemblies, when every ear is open to receive the words of salvation, when some are filled with distressing fears for their safety, and others with joy and love and hope.

When christians enjoy a spirit of grace and supplication, and new converts exhibit deep solicitude and untiring zeal for the salvation of their companions and friends ; how does the believer renew his strength, and gather fresh supplies of wisdom and grace, to pursue a little longer his pilgrimage on earth to his rest in Heaven ! How are the tender

sympathies of his nature called into exercise, and the affections soothed to sweet devotion ! A deep and solemn stillness pervades the public assembly, and he is ready to say, The LORD is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep *silence* before him. The day is a delight, the place is honorable and glorious. In thy temple shall every one speak of thy glory.

Is there not reason to believe, since the philosophy of the human mind under the operation of religious motives is better understood ; since a flood of light is shed upon the sacred scriptures, and the advantages to explain the Bible, and apprehend its momentous truths, are far greater than have been heretofore enjoyed ; since the style of writing and preaching is more direct and pungent, that more striking displays of the divine presence will be witnessed in this temple than in the former ? When greater numbers, raised from the ruins of the apostacy by the grace of God, and sanctified by his Spirit, will subscribe with their own hands unto the Lord, and return to Zion with songs and everlasting joys upon their heads.

This house will be more glorious with the presence of Christ, because the worship of God will be more holy and pure. The services of religion, the various acts of devotion in which men engage, are pure and holy in proportion to the number of Christ's true disciples who perform them ; their knowledge of divine things ; the elevation of their christian character, the spirituality of their devotions, and their progress in the ways of godliness. The children of God are under greater advantages to grow in grace and be eminently holy, than in

former periods of the world. In this respect our life seems to have fallen upon altogether a new dispensation. The number of God's people is constantly increasing, the churches are enlarged with efficient members, and soon we may hope that all the worshippers in this temple will become incorporated with Christ's visible kingdom. And with the ascendancy which divine truth will have in the hearts and lives of his people, it is true that the worship of God will be proportionably more pure and holy. This house will probably live to the dawn of the millenium; this church may flourish in the midst of it. If the power of the gospel is displayed in such a wonderful manner in coming years, as it has been in preceding periods of the church; if converts to the religion of Jesus, and believers in the sublime doctrines of the christian faith, are multiplied in a geometrical ratio; if the truth of God, which is his wisdom, and power, moves forward, with its subduing and transforming influence, overcoming every obstacle which resists its progress, and bringing the hearts of men under the controlling power of religion, this sanctuary will be filled with the presence of Christ, and the rich manifestations of his goodness.

And are there not clear indications that the Lord is turning back the captivity of his people? Do not the movements in the moral world evince the power and pleasure of God with reference to his people? Believers are going out into the highways and hedges, and compelling sinners to bring themselves within the voice of mercy, with strong faith in their salvation. Christ is calling his sons from far, and his daughters from the ends of the

earth. Light and truth are breaking through the clouds of darkness and sin which have long obscured their brightness ; the church is waking up from her long slumbers of apathy, and coming forward to the standard of life and action ; and all the wisdom and energy of the advocates of good morals and the friends of vital religion, are becoming concentrated for the diffusion of the blessings of salvation, and for the conversion of men. Have we not reason to believe, that this house, dedicated to the service of God, will be the theatre of the wonderful displays of divine mercy? That God's glory will be seen in the sanctuary with surprising splendor? That converts to the faith and practice of religion will be multiplied as the drops of the morning dew? That the ministers of Jesus, with impassioned eloquence on the theme of immortal love and the everlasting destinies of men, will here build up an immortal kingdom, which will shine with the splendor of Heaven, when the material universe shall be no more?

In anticipation, looking down the vista of future years, I see the blessed influences of the gospel upon this future congregation. Here the sinner is humbled at the footstool of divine mercy, and the doubting are established in the truths of religion. Here christians are lively stones in the temple of God, reflecting the moral image of the blessed Saviour, and "the aged, like Simeon and Anna, with every desire accomplished, ready to depart, and children climbing a father's knees to hear of Christ." Generations unborn will here behold the wonderful triumphs of redeeming love, and this goodly edifice will be to multitudes the *house of*

God and the gate of Heaven. At this Table of the Lord, may a great company of believers celebrate the dying love of their risen and glorified Saviour, and around this Altar may the children receive the seal of the covenant, in a solemn dedication to God, and hear the voice of the Saviour, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.

May this house be glorious with the presence of God. May Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwell in it, with the refreshing dews of grace, and help his people in their labours and trials on earth, and in their preparation for the blessedness of Heaven.

The great purposes of salvation are principally to be accomplished through the instrumentality of a preached gospel. This is the grand means which a sovereign God has seen fit to use in enlightening, convincing and reforming men, and sanctifying them by the Spirit, for the employments of his heavenly kingdom. For while I believe in the necessity of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to repentance, and to humble them at the feet of Jesus; while I believe that God gives the increase; that the excellency of the power is *of him*, and not of us, and that to *him* must be ascribed the glory of man's salvation; I as truly believe, that *ardent feeling, persuasive eloquence, apostolic fervor, and enlightened zeal* for the salvation of men, are intimately connected with the greatest number of conversions, and the purity of divine worship, and the glorious triumphs of universal benevolence. Let it be graven on the walls of this house, and more deeply on the tablets of our hearts, that while the

power is of God, and all hope of success in the work of renovating a world, is in his blessing ; that he yet converts men by the instrumentality of his own truth, and applies by the Spirit no other instrument to the heart ; and that the effect ordinarily is in proportion to the clearness, force and eloquence with which that *truth is preached*.

REMARKS.

1. That this house may be glorious, it should be *specially dedicated to the holy worship of God*. It must never be devoted to purposes of gain, or unhallowed worldly employments. For holiness becometh the house of the Lord forever, and all things disconnected with the services of religion are to be excluded from the place of sacred devotions. All unholy affections of mind towards God, and our fellow men, are to be kept out of this place. 'This is the temple of God ; and how can it subserve the purposes of devotion, unless there be similarity of feeling and sentiment, and united cordial attachment to the things of religion.

All feelings of pride and haughtiness must be excluded from the mind ; every thing which looks like ostentation must be separated from solemn acts of religious worship. We come not here to be seen of men, to show off our persons to good advantage. 'This is not the place to perform a few religious services on the Sabbath, just as a cloak to cover the sins we may commit on the rest of the week. We come not here to indulge spiritual pride, attaching any peculiar merit to ourselves, as those who piously regard the Lord's day ; but as the *humble and sincere* worshippers

of God, who have duties to perform of a high responsibility, with which are associated present happiness and future rewards. The believer should realize that a broken heart, a lowly disposition, alone can render his imperfect devotions acceptable to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ. How foreign, then, from religious concerns, is a spirit of display? The heart of the true worshipper says, Let them be excluded from my devotions, away from every religious duty. Come not nigh, ye intruders, to my hallowed hours. Let me go to the house of God with a placid serenity of mind. Let me be divested of every thing, which may separate my soul from sweet communion with my Saviour and God.

All dissensions must be kept out of the house of the Lord. Whatever differences of opinion or sentiments on *common subjects*, may agitate the mind and honestly govern the conduct, they should all be left at the very threshold of this sacred temple, they should be banished from the place in our approaches to an holy God. Profane not the place, abuse not the privileges of public worship, with dispositions which cannot profit, and which will prevent that religious improvement which in other circumstances you might enjoy. Say, to these unholy affections, Away from this consecrated retreat. Here let my mind dwell upon the love and grace of God, in the deliverance of man from the power of sin, and his translation into the kingdom of Christ. Let my attention be fixed upon the momentous concerns of eternity, with which I shall soon be familiar; let me think of my ways, repent of my sins, and execute new resolutions of a better life.

All worldly-mindedness, ideas of trafficking, and calculations respecting the common occupations of life, are to be shut out of this sanctuary. 'This building is the Lord's, in an exalted sense. Here will his glory be displayed, and the sacred presence of the Great Head of the Church enjoyed. The business to be done here is such as ought to interest every individual ; it is an eternal transaction, with which is connected the glory of Jehovah, and man's immortal destiny. The house, with all its sacred furniture, is to-day dedicated to God. O let it never be polluted to sacrilegious ends.

Our Lord on a certain occasion went up to the temple for religious purposes, and found it profaned by transactions of a worldly kind, many of which at another time, and in another place, could not have been lawfully prosecuted. So little regard was had to the appropriate duties of the place, that the people were found engaged in the acquisition of property. Our Lord's holy indignation was aroused at such a perversion of the temple and its ordinances, and he overthrew the ^{tables} ~~temples~~ of the money changers, and said, *Take these things hence*—make not my Father's house an house of merchandize—my house shall be called an house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. The conduct of Christ was of so decided a character that his disciples immediately recollected a saying recorded in the Psalms, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. That is, I am inwardly consumed by an earnest desire to purify thy sacred ordinances and thy holy habitation. Would you enjoy the presence of Christ? Shall the glory of this latter house be greater than the former? The

purposes of this temple, its ministry, the duties here inculcated, and the doctrines unfolded, and the ordinances celebrated, must be those which the Bible discloses, and upon which is stamped the broad seal of Heaven.

Here may there always be a pious and devoted Minister, free to examine and think and act for himself; whose mind is not shackled by systems of faith, and foreclosed against all the light which science, and controversy, and theological learning, have shed upon the sacred scriptures. One who shall not suit his instructions to gratify a fastidious taste, or *please* his people; but one who feels the awful responsibility of an ambassador of Christ, who draws his opinions and messages from the lively oracles of God. A minister of the everlasting Gospel, one who will not wish to gratify a part of his people, and think his duty discharged when they are pleased; but one whose commission is from God, to whom he is soon to give an account, and who never asks whether good people or bad people are gratified with his labours; but, *whether God is pleased and honoured*. Whether he shows God's people their transgressions, and calls back to duty some wanderer from the fold of Jesus? Whether the *Law* speaks out its thunders to the wicked, and they are alarmed with fears, and convinced of sin, and turn from their evil ways and live? It will be his solicitude to know whether he be a son of consolation to the broken-hearted, returning penitent; and whether to such, the *Gospel* in his hands whispers peace. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the

word of truth—a steward of the manifold mysteries of God.

This sacred edifice is consecrated to the defence and maintenance of the faith once delivered to the saints; to the propagation of the great doctrines of the reformation which have come down to us by revelation, and for the defence of which a great company of holy men have counted not their lives dear to them, thus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And far distant be the period when the trumpet of the gospel shall not sound the alarm to the impenitent, and Christ and him crucified shall not be the life and substance of the religion which is here preached. When that day shall come, *Ichabod* will be engraven upon these walls, for the glory will have departed.

While there is a system of revealed truth denominated evangelical, for which it becomes christians to sacrifice any interest however dear, we should guard against fruitless attempts to secure the agreement of even good men upon various topics, unessential to the christian faith, lest we fritter away the gospel, lose sight of its true object, and neutralize its influence upon our souls. Religion demands the united efforts and concentrated energies of all the friends of Jesus; and it becomes them to remember, *they see through a glass darkly, they know but in part*. Do not cherish a dogmatical, unyielding spirit; but while in your life is manifested the power of your own principles, give full credit to the honesty of your neighbour's opinions, if there be unequivocal evidence that the grace of God has found a lodgment in his heart. "There always has been debateable ground in the

church, and with humility let it be said, this ground is the theatre of the enemy's triumph." Some doctrines are so clearly revealed, that none need mistake them who number themselves with the people of God. And I see not what evidence of piety an understanding person can have, or what claims upon our charity he may possess, who denies them. These are the personality and divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, distinct in their offices, but one great object of love and worship; the fall of man, and the entire depravity of the whole human family as the consequence of it; the human and divine natures of Christ, as becoming sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him—that the divine law might be sustained, and the guilty reclaimed to holiness and favor, on the conditions of repentance and faith; the sovereign and special influence of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, or changing the heart; justification by faith through the redemption of Christ; the doctrine of future endless punishment to the wicked, and the everlasting rewards of the righteous, who are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith unto eternal life. These great and fundamental truths are so legibly written upon the sacred page, that all true christians have embraced them. Let them never be relinquished. While strenuous efforts should be made to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace; let it be remembered that christian love does not require, nor is true peace ever purchased by a relinquishment of principle, or giving up any of the revealed truth of God. Let there be no compromise with error; let God's word be true,

and every rational being submit to his will. May there be no catering here to gratify the capricious appetites of men, and to secure an ephemeral popularity, at the expense of their everlasting destruction. Here let there be no displays of eloquence to please the imagination, and soothe the voice of conscience by sweet melodious accents. Here let not the voice of thunder speak, when there are no vivid flashes of divine truth to alarm the fears, and convince the soul of the dread realities of eternity. This sacred temple is dedicated to the clear and forcible exhibition of religious truth in all its bearings, and with all its results, that it may prove the wisdom of God and the power of God in the salvation of men. The advocate of loose morals, and the scoffer at religion; the sabbath-breaker, and they who *tarry long at the cup*; the profane swearer, and the liar, and all who connive at iniquity by precept or example—and they who join hand in hand to demolish the institutions of religion, and prostrate the evangelical system, which God himself has sanctioned, and blessed with the peculiar tokens of his favor, will here be reprov'd of sin, righteousness, and a judgment to come. The object and design of this building, and the motives which have led to its erection, we wish not to be concealed, but would have them stand out in bold relief, and be seen by all who worship in this place. We would here train up immortal beings for the kingdom of heaven. We would build up an interest which will last forever; not by deception, or worldly prudence, or any concealment of the truth, or any union of interests which have no affinity for each other—for Christ's kingdom is

never sustained in this way. But by the *plain preaching of the gospel*; by bringing the truth of God to bear directly upon the sinner's conscience; by rousing stupid christians to duty, and showing them their transgressions, and raising the voice of remonstrance against prevalent sins and practices inconsistent with the gospel of Christ; by urging upon the impenitent the duty of repentance and love to God, opening to them their state as sinners, helpless and hopeless without the grace of Christ, and constantly exposed to the wrath of God, whose law they have wilfully broken, and the principles of whose kingdom they have prostrated, and by beseeching them, with all the eloquence of grief and tenderness, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, to become reconciled to God.

One great design of this edifice is to oppose the torrent of *infidelity* and *irreligion*, under whatever form it may show itself; whether of pretended conscientious scruples concerning the rites of religion, or the desecration of a holy Sabbath, or the lax discipline of the church, or taking from the Saviour divine honors, or the denial of future and everlasting punishment. Let it be distinctly understood that error and sin will find no shelter here. For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle.

Better that these walls should crumble to pieces, and this house should be demolished by the lightning of heaven, than that it should be appropriated to the subversion of the true interests of the church.

2. If we would have this house glorious with the presence of Christ, *the Church, the professed*

people of God, must be holy. They must cultivate religion, keeping their hearts with all diligence, and constantly resisting the temptations of the world. How many churches have made shipwreck of the faith, dishonored the name by which they were called, become a prey to devouring wolves, and actually gone over to the side of the adversary, by remissness in practice, and inattention to the great duties of their profession. If the people of God attach little importance to their religious character and influence, and satisfy themselves with an external devotion, without corresponding holy affections of mind and purity of motives, religion will greatly decline, the Spirit of God will withhold his saving influences, and the church will have but a name to live. It is not sufficient to guard *the door of the church*. Christians are to be watchful and prayerful, and to exercise a godly jealousy over themselves, after they are incorporated with *Christ's visible kingdom*. They are to engage in all the offices of duty and piety, by which their hopes will be strengthened, their faith confirmed, and their graces invigorated, and so become marked as a peculiar people, zealous of good works. So holy and unblameable should their lives be, that none can mistake their true religious character. In this consists much of the power and glory of religion. Here is a voice which is heard, and tells mightily on the destinies of men. What christian is not ashamed, when he reflects upon the influence of his life and deeds upon the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, and the everlasting happiness or misery of his fellow men? He looks forward a few years, and hears the loud ho-

sannas of some blessed immortal raised to heaven through the power of his example ; or hears the direful imprecations of lost spirits in despair, whose destruction he assisted to promote. Who will not be excited to vigorous enterprize in the church, by a serious reflection on the influence of his life upon the eternal condition of his friends and associates.

You believe in the power of divine truth, that God blesses it to the conversion and salvation of men. Exhibit the influence of truth on your hearts, by aiming individually at high attainments in religion, and in stirring up each other's minds by way of remembrance. Often think of your solemn consecration to God, and the sacred duties of your profession, and be drawing yourselves up to a stricter practice, and press forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Always give a serious and prayerful attention to the services of religion, and be not weary in well doing ; always abound in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. You have made a noble consecration of your property to the service of God ; shall not this building stand as a pledge, that all your powers shall be the Lord's ; that henceforth you will be more eminently holy, to the praise of him who loved you and gave himself for you ? Soon your days of activity will be over, and opportunities of usefulness will have passed away, and your accounts will be sealed up to the judgment. Whatever is done for God and the world, must be done quickly. Some of your number, whose hopes were high, and prospects bright, and who looked forward to this day as the begin-

ning of a new era in the history of this church—some, whose hearts were with us at the commencement of this temple—have rested from their labors and gone to their reward. Their mantle is with us—we remember their example, and zeal, and peaceful death. But I forbear—their record is on high. May we not suppose their spirits are hovering about this place, and mingling in the congratulations of this occasion. Let us be quickened in duty, let us renew our strength, and this day bind ourselves with solemn devotion to the service of Christ in an edifice designed to perpetuate the faith of our fathers, and prepare immortals for the pure worship of heaven.

We need the *Holy Spirit* effectually to subdue the heart of man to the practice of godliness, and its blessed influences may be enjoyed. But has not the Spirit often been grieved away and resisted by the coldness and indifference of the professed people of God? Has he not come near with a gracious visit, and departed, yea, been driven away, by the love of the world, engagedness in its cares, and the fear of losing a little time, which has been so prominently marked in the lives of the professed followers of Christ; when the wicked have triumphed, the tokens of the divine displeasure have multiplied, and the impenitent have gone on quietly, in unbroken ranks, to people the world of woe. Sin lieth at the door of the church; and when Jehovah shall make inquisition for blood, where will christians hide themselves from God's holy indignation? It is sometimes the case, when Zion languishes, and believers indulge spiritual sloth, and feel no deep solicitude for perishing sinners;

when their devotions are cold and heavy, and no special exertions are made to awaken the careless devotee of the world, and lodge divine truth in the sensibilities of his soul; that they ascribe the *want of a revival* to the *sovereignty of divine grace*, and say, we must wait God's time. O, what a dreadful profanation of the truth of God, as an apology for the inactivity of the sluggish friends of Jesus! The sovereignty of divine grace never kept back the Spirit of God; but the wicked negligence and unbelief and coldness of the professed friends of Christ. *Awake to the demands of religion. Cultivate holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. Act up to the dignity of your profession, as those who are intrusted with the interests of God's kingdom on earth, and who would enjoy his presence and see his glory in the sanctuary.

3. To enjoy the presence of Christ, people must be willing *to bear* the faithful exhibition of truth, and to place themselves under its influence. No considerations of worldly interest, should keep them away from the declarations of God's mercy, or the plain reproofs of religion. It has come to pass in these days of free enquiry and lax morality, that individuals, who exhibit for a season much zeal and apparent interest in the prosperity of religion, become offended, *in reality* with the plainness and fidelity of their ministers, and under pretence of conscientious scruples about the rites of religion, or some other plea, connect themselves with religious communities where the preaching is less offensive. Conscience is a great thing with them; when the God of Heaven knows they have no conscience about religion, but hate the truth of

God, and are determined to go where, if it is preached at all, the course of instruction is more congenial to the wicked, selfish dispositions of men; where it flatters their ambition, and strongly appeals to the pride of the human heart. Such persons wish to get away from the strict morality and pressing injunctions of the holy gospel, and wish not to have, *every Sabbath*, a dagger thrown into their breasts, which gives them so much uneasiness and pain. This is the true secret of so much sectarian zeal and exertion. Men want a little *more latitude* in religion, and though some are not willing to renounce *all that is evangelical* in their belief and practice; they wish to make a compromise with error, and so by loud pretensions to a correct faith, they give a license to their passions, and a license to their tongues, and are the most dangerous members of a christian community. How can God's presence, or the blessing of Christ, or the Spirit of grace, ever be expected to visit the hearts of such men? There is far less probability of their salvation, than of the most determined opposers of godliness. Opposition to the gospel we expect, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and Christ's kingdom is not of this world. But they who wish to be christians; they who admire the influence of religion on society, and are understandingly convinced of its divine origin, and its happy effects on the community, must be willing to hear the gospel plainly expounded and faithfully enforced. It should be their constant and uniform practice to attend upon the means of grace, and bring all under their influence to the house of God.

If any thing is said which conflicts with long

cherished opinions, and strikes a death-blow at old habits and practices, the people are not to be offended with the preacher, because he tells them the truth ; but they should remember he is set apart for this very business ; to open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, *to instruct*, enlighten and reform mankind. Many persons, who lay some claim to intelligence, think, if any thing *new* is advanced, not exactly as they have thought, or believed, it must be passed over, as erroneous, or unimportant, because it was new to them ; or if the minister presses these truths, Sabbath after Sabbath, *suspensions* are thrown out concerning him, and individuals fail of that religious improvement which might have been enjoyed ; when the servant of Christ was diligently pursuing the even tenor of his way, and doing all in his power to save immortal souls. The duty is for all to hear, examine and prove what is said *individually* by the gospel of God ; if it be agreeable to this standard, it must be received. No matter whether old divinity or new, it must be received into the heart, and whoever is so securely settled down in his own belief as to shut his eyes against light, and his understanding against knowledge, *may be a good man*, but is very far from being an efficient, intelligent, growing christian. Come always to the sanctuary, expecting to be instructed, receive truth in meekness and candour, and if it proves a mirror to show you the face of your heart, it will prove like a refiner's fire, cleansing and purifying in its effects. Come not here to criticise, and compare the services of one minister with another, and find matter of talk and speculation. But remember,

the *weakest servant of Jesus* whom you ever heard preach, has declared truths which will have a decided bearing on your future destiny ; and hereafter you must answer for the manner in which you heard, and the improvement made of his precious instructions.

A few words to the members of this Society, and I have done.

This day, to you, my friends, is one of peculiar favour, interest and solemnity. When, in the providence of God, the holy and beautiful house in which your fathers worshipped, was burnt up with fire, you did not fold up your hands in sloth, and settle down with stupid indifference, and say, 'The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built. There was an unanimous voice of resolution and enterprize—*Let us go forward*—let us arise and build—and you have strengthened your hands to the good work. Having commended the undertaking to God, and prayed for his blessing, you have with a generous liberality and zeal gone forward with commendable decision of character. The work is done ; the temple of God is built, and we are now assembled to dedicate it to his service. This chaste building stands, as the evidence of the religious principle and untiring devotion of this people. You have, my friends, only to revert to the history of this Society, and know that under God, nothing but decision and enterprize have saved you from being scattered and peeled. On all sides, and even among us, there have been foes to our prosperity, constantly fomenting discord and strife, and trying to palsy the arm and prostrate the energies of this religious community. Under

various pretences, false and futile, your name has been cast out with reproach, and you have been represented as *weak, and feeble in resources*. But none of these things have moved you. This Society still lives and flourishes; and the *necessity* laid upon you to erect a house for the worship of God, is a token of the divine favor. You have prosecuted this work under various discouragements. Evils and disasters have been prophesied of you, with the hope that success would never crown your efforts. But all these predictions have failed. *Their origin was a bad heart, an evil disposition*, and they have vanished into thin air.

These evil surmises and predictions concerning you, were nothing new under the sun. When Nehemiah fasted, and prayed, and wept, because of the desolations of the holy city, and set himself to work to build again the wall, and said to the rulers, The God of Heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build; Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, and it grieved him exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. The enemies of righteousness, and false pretenders to godliness, always tremble to see men forward in promoting religion, or doing any thing to extend the power of the gospel. They misrepresented the motives of these pious men, and mocked and hooted at them, and represented their plan as chimerical and beyond their means. What do these feeble Jews? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, which are burned? Even that which they build,

if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall. Nehemiah encouraged the people and said, Be not afraid of them—remember the Lord which is *great and terrible*. For it was evident the hand of the Lord was with him. So they laboured in the work with great perseverance, and built the wall, and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof, for the people had a mind to work.

It was true religious principle which carried these persecuted Jews forward in the work of the Lord, and all their energies were roused up to the performance of the labour. Whatever plans of worldly gain may have been cherished, such motives never had power to erect this temple for God. It hath gone up from a lively sense of duty to the great Head of the Church, and a regard to the improvement and spiritual welfare of this community. You have felt the privilege of cheerfully and liberally devoting your substance to establish a place for the honor and worship of God, where his true character may be exhibited, and his law published; where the relation of man to God will be made known, and the obedience he requires of his rational offspring; where a messenger of mercy will open to men their condition as sinners, and the means which God has provided to reinstate them in his favour; where the sacred ordinances of the church will be administered, and the disciples of Jesus grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

While with pleasure we extend the humble tribute of our thanks to the Committee, who have superintended this work, and to the various mechanics who have so faithfully executed their offices, and in such an orderly manner have prosecuted

this enterprize, we desire first to express our grateful acknowledgments to the Father of mercies, for his beneficent care in preserving the lives of *all* who have been more immediately concerned in the erection of this building.

The house is completed. You might have secured a house of worship at a cheaper rate—but you chose to build a temple in this elegant, though plain and simple style; and while its symmetry and just proportions will catch the eye of the passing traveller, it will stand as a monument of the *wisdom, good taste and judgment of this Society.* It was a *generous liberality* which devised and executed this noble structure. There is nothing here to gratify the desires or suit the wishes of the avaricious, and there never should be in an house for God—for the offering which costs nothing, is worth nothing. But there is much to suit the feelings, improve the manners, and mend the heart of a benevolent worshipper of Jesus Christ.

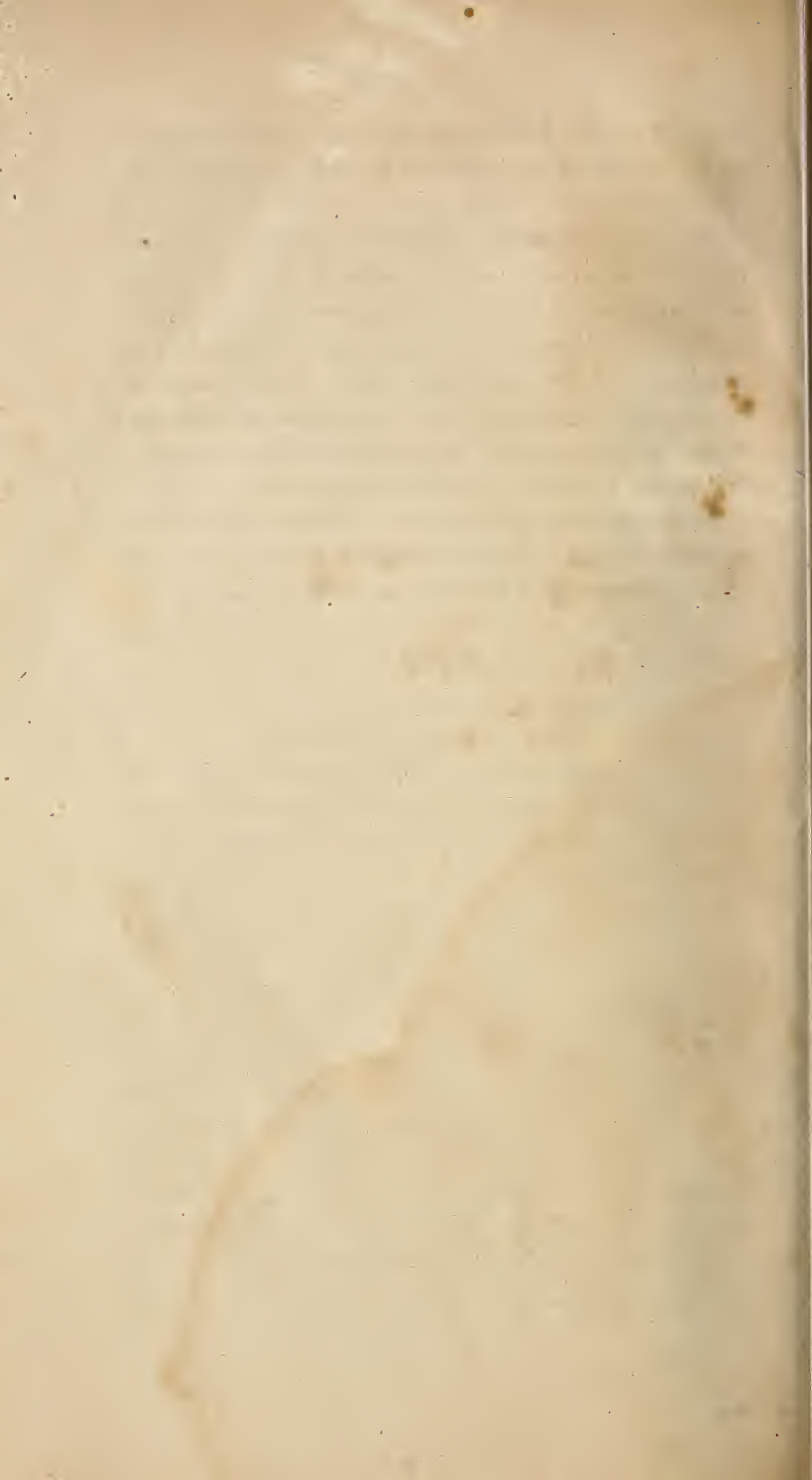
The house is finished—and we solemnly dedicate it to JEHOVAH, Father, Son and Holy Ghost—but the great end of this temple is not obtained without saving benefit. Though much is accomplished, much remains to be effected. The salvation of your souls must be an object in importance paramount to all other considerations whatever. What advantage to assist in building an house for God on earth, and mingling in its hallowed employments, with no evidence of a preparation for that temple which is not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens? Let all earthly things be subservient to the acquisition of an interest in Christ. Endeavour to have a constant and realizing sense

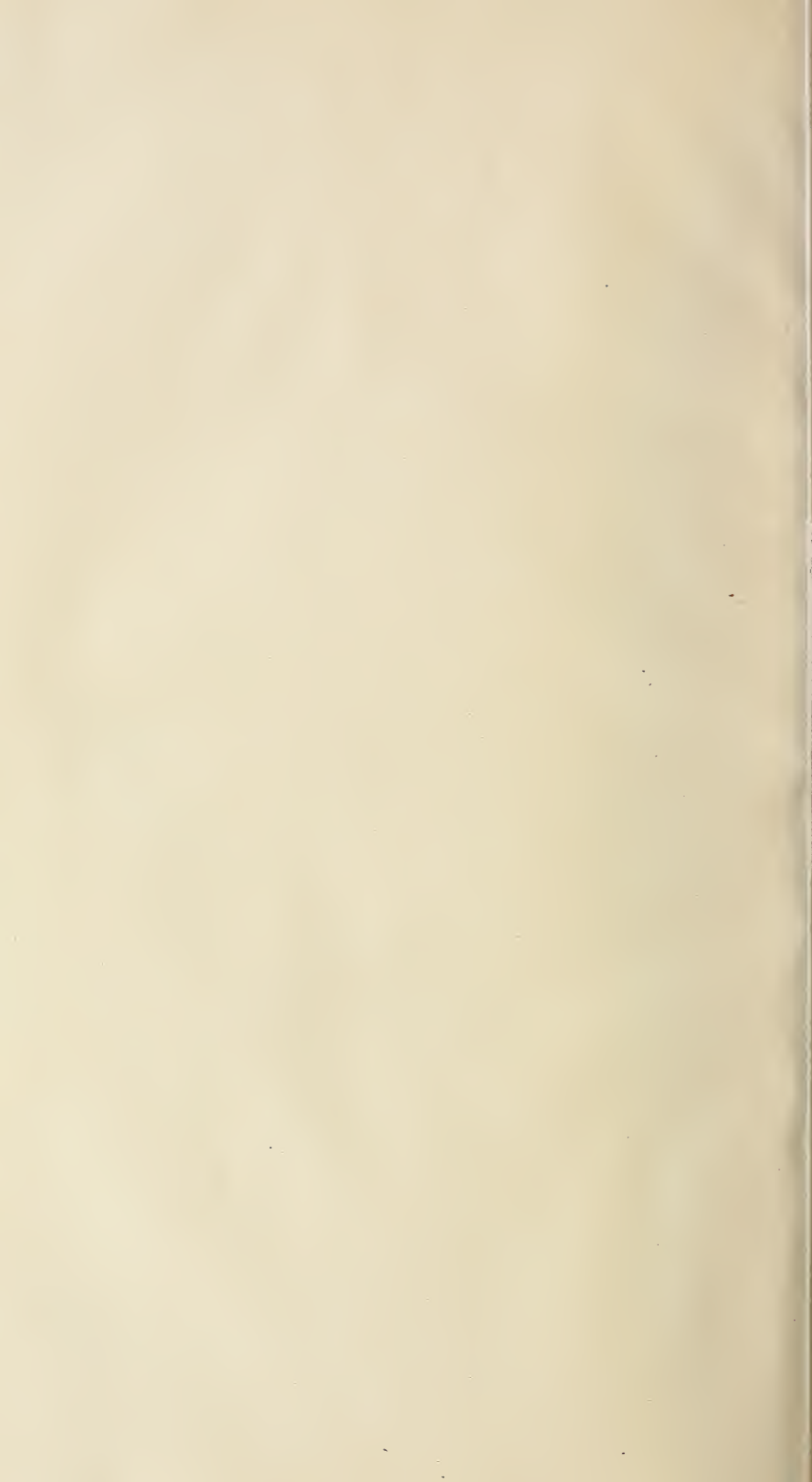
of the high and important ends of your existence, and bring all your powers to bear upon your eternal interest.

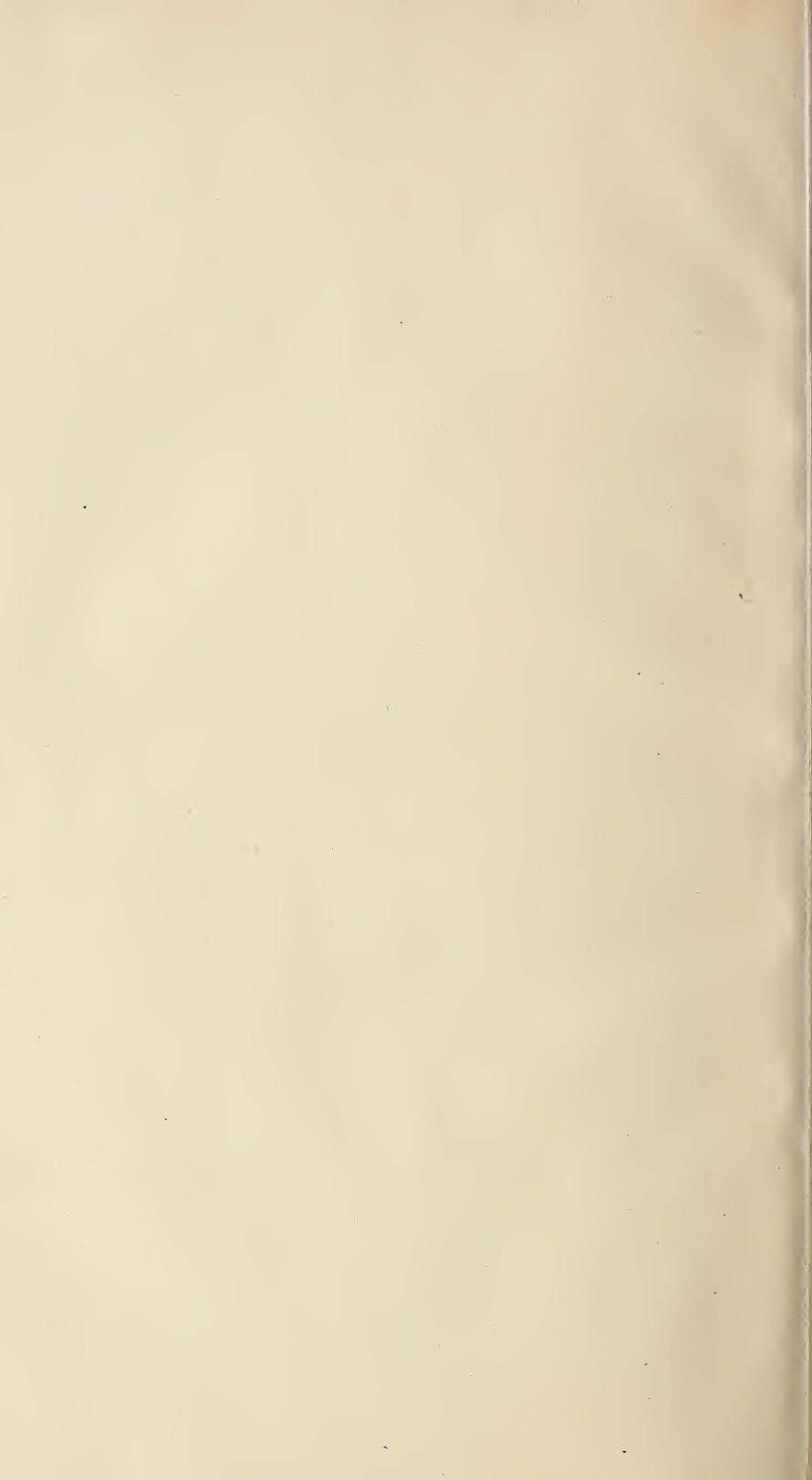
We have begun to assemble in this new house ; let us always come here to worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us feel the presence of Christ, and may we here see his glory, and rejoice in his goodness. Here may the Holy Spirit fill this house with glory in the multiplication of the triumphs of divine mercy to the honor of God's name, and to the enlargement of his kingdom.

Arise, O God, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy.

AMEN.



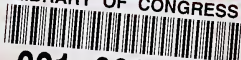








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